

**Culture of the Russian Federation World
Headstart/First Semester European I School**

**Selected Aspects of Russian
Religion/Culture
Volume I
Units 1-6**

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Preface

This preface outlines objectives for Culture of the Russian Federation World. Throughout this study, readers should recognize the following:

- **Importance of Area** Underlying all discussion is the premise that the Russian Federation World is important to vital national interests of the United States.
- **Sensitivity** In dealing with the region, military intelligence linguists must demonstrate discretion, tactfulness, and grace.
- **Variety** Though bound by common, uniting principles and beliefs, cultures and religions within the former Soviet Union possess great variety.
- **Resources Available** Listed at the conclusion of each module are resources, many of which are readily available, that provide deeper insight and awareness.

Each unit begins with overall objectives of that section of study. A vocabulary list follows every narrative. Included are review quizzes, designed to enhance learning of unit objectives. Sources used in the narrative and resources for further study are then stated.



Maps are a part of the country area studies. Hopefully, students will use these tools to familiarize themselves with this region, providing a context for their language study.

Highlighted portions offer readers an opportunity to skim and capture extremely important information at a quick glance.

The text is in two sections. Units 1-6 (Volume I), and Units 7-12 (Volume II). A pronunciation guide is located on the inside back cover.

Readers select and choose as appropriate to their specific area.



Introduction

I. The intent of this cultural/religious overview of the Russian Federation world is to

1. Provide a context, a schema, a broad knowledge of the Russian world. The projected audience is Russian language students and the faculty who instruct these students.

2. Address content Final Learning Objectives (FLOs). This work treats the basic, commonly understood themes of the following FLOs:

- a. Holidays/Observances
- b. Customs
- c. Religious Groups
- d. Ethnic/Racial Groups
- e. Gender Issues
- f. Conflicts

The goal is establishment of a "level playing field" where students and faculty can possess competency in a common cultural literacy for this area of the world. In addition, this project introduces entry level military intelligence personnel to critical elements of the Russian intelligence picture.

3. Facilitate Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center instruction. The finished product of this study is an interactive, computerized, programmed instruction text. Hopefully, language department chairs and team leaders will integrate this study into their first semester culture content portions of instruction.

At a minimum, this tool will serve students awaiting entry into Russian language classes (Headstart and casual status students) and new instructors.



II. The content is not free of bias. Six underlying principles guide presentations.

1. The common Russian identity of the region Though comprised of diverse ethnic identities and peoples, a common identity--due in part to decades of Soviet rule and imposition of the Russian language--prevails in the Russian Federation. This character extends throughout Russia--from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok.

2. Broad understanding of the term "religions." This text applies the following definition of religion.

"Religion is an individual's or a society's response to/search for that which it/they think(s)/feel(s) is ultimately real, truly true, articulated in myth, acted out in ritual, expressed in symbols, engendering (and being engendered by) powerful sentiments (an ethos) and usually embodied in institutions."

-- Dr. Charles Ryerson, Princeton Theological Seminary, Syllabus, HR 345 Hinduism, Spring 1996.

3. Context Students and faculty cannot adequately understand specific aspects of one country or ethnic group without awareness of broader links to the Russian Federation world. This study makes a step in providing such linkage.

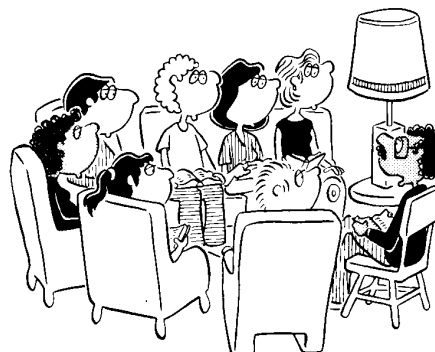
4. Respect The treatment of Russian Orthodox, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism found within this text seeks to be positive, affirming, and peace enhancing.

The goal is to understand the point of view of practitioners of a given religion in this area of the world. An objective, empathetic, somewhat detached treatment of major Russian Federation religions is the aim. The author stays away from apologetic, polemical stances concerning the faiths presented.



5. Perspective This text draws upon printed, academic and popular accounts as sources of information. Much material is from secondary rather than primary language texts. Thus, the perspective may be skewed, treating Russian Federation culture and religion from a more refined, educated light. Thus, the "soil and blood," passionate, firsthand, emotionally-earnest, ground level views of issues treated may not be present.

6. Resources Through use of this guide, students and faculty have a springboard to further personal/group study and analysis. The aim is discernment in use of the huge amounts of material available on the subject of Russian culture/religion.



III. Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)

BLUFs--the underlying objectives for each module--follow. Readers will grow in their understanding of...

Unit 1. Cultural Awareness

- Importance of sensitivity by military intelligence linguists to Russian culture
- Cultural awareness advantages inherently possessed by military personnel

Unit 2. Historical Overview

- Long-lasting effects of history within the former Soviet Union region
- Interwoven nature of religion and history within Russia

Unit 3a. Russian Orthodox Religious History

- Distinct religious expression and impact of Russian Orthodox thought and practice on the Russian Federation

Unit 3b. Non-Russian Orthodox Religious History

- Distinct religious expression and impact of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and the Ukrainian Catholic Church (Uniates) thought and practice on the Russian Federation

Unit 4a. Foundational Beliefs--Judaism

- Common beliefs held by many Jewish adherents
- Unique expressions of Judaism within the Russian Federation

Unit 4b. Foundational Beliefs--Russian Orthodox

- Common beliefs and worship practices
- Unique expressions of Russian Orthodox practice in the Russian Federation

Unit 4c. Foundational Beliefs--Islam

- Common beliefs held by most Muslims
- Unique expressions of Islam within the Russian Federation

Unit 5. Holidays and Observances

- Distinctive Jewish, Russian Orthodox and Muslim religious/cultural holidays and observances
- Significance of holidays and observances for tactical, operational and strategic military missions

Unit 6. Gestures and Taboos

- Foundational principles to apply when interacting with a new culture
- Importance of manners and customs to cultural understanding

- Selected manners and customs, do's and taboos to remember when working with Russian counterparts

Unit 7. Ethnic Groups

- Variety of ethnic groups within the Russian Federation
- Distinctives and unique practice of selected ethnic groups within the Russian Federation

Unit 8a. Islamic Texts--Societal Implications

- Ethical practices and views toward violence within Islamic thought

Unit 8b. Russian Orthodox Texts--Societal Implications

- Distinct Russian Orthodox church/state relations

Unit 9. U.S. Relations--the Russian Federation

- Principles of United States foreign policy toward Russia

Unit 10. Gender Issues

- Unique Muslim, Russian Orthodox and Jewish perspectives concerning women

Unit 11. County Area Study--Russian Federation

- An overview of the Russian Federation
- Distinctive religious practices within the region
- Country locations
- General and commonly understood treatment of the following Final Learning Objectives (FLOs) for the Russian Federation:
 1. Holidays and Observances
 2. Customs
 3. Religious Groups
 4. Ethnic and Racial Groups
 5. Gender Issues
 6. Conflicts

Unit 12. Resources--Russian Federation

- Book, periodical, audio-visual, and electronic (World Wide Web) resources available for further study
- Necessity of discernment in dealing with the overwhelming amount of information available on Russian cultures/religions

IV. Selected Aspects of Policy--Religion in the Classroom

1. Introduction Few subjects engender more controversy than does religion. In the laboratory of the DLIFLC classroom, this is also the case. Objective treatment of our own or another's religious point of view is inhibited due, in part, to the following.



a. Professional-personal dichotomy Many of us feel our expressed religious views must be included in all that we do. The intensely personal nature of religious thought and practice cannot be excluded from "who we are." How can we divorce from us that which is dearest, namely our religious belief and practice? In the structured environment of the classroom, we feel we cannot exclude our personal perspectives, assumptions and understandings. Yet, impartiality and fairness is often impeded by such a perspective.

b. Personal histories Many of us come from backgrounds where our "personal stories" include instances of harassment, persecution, and ill-treatment, all because of one religious persuasion or another. It is difficult to be somewhat objective when we possess such heritages.

c. Faith traditions Some of us come from aggressive, assertive, and zealous faiths wherein evangelism is a central tenant of our practice. Consequently, it may be hard to maintain sensitivity to other points of view.

d. Perceptions of America We may think freedom of religion entitles us to brandish our beliefs to whomever we can. Difficulties in church/state understandings can muddle our views.



America is governed however, by the rule of law, the written word, the Constitution. This standard entitles all United States citizens to freely exercise their own faith and practice. It requires sensitivity and impartiality to instruct within the confines of the Department of Defense classroom.

e. Student views Often due to immaturity, restricted background or rigidity in mindset, students project misconceptions, prejudices, stereotypes and insensitivities into the classroom. Remaining courteous and civil in the face of such inaccuracies can become burdensome.

f. 2/2/2 pressures We do not want to take time away from the ultimate goal, producing trained linguists in our target languages. Some see treatments of culture/religion as detracting from this overall objective.

g. "Safe" position Due to all the controversy engendered by religion, some think the best position is to ignore its consideration altogether. Such treatment does a disservice to our students. In most cultures of the world, religion is fused with culture, language and world view.

h. Curriculum Dated texts, seemingly inaccurate or incomplete treatments of religions of an area cause agitation and upset. If we try to create our own culture content presentations, sorting through the huge amounts of religious information available creates understanding barriers.

2. Policy As mandated by the National Security Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency, Final Learning Objectives (FLOs) for DLIFLC students include areas pertaining to culture as affected by religion. Due however, to the potentially controversial nature of religion/culture, the easiest course of action often is to ignore or neglect these critical areas. Such disregard does disservice to our students.



As we embark upon the 21st century, the religious dimensions of culture are crucial to understanding the geopolitical framework in which DLIFLC students perform their mission. The following policy clarifies and implements guidance when dealing with the potentially controversial subject of the religious dimensions of culture.

a. Caution and Care Instructors and curriculum developers must utilize caution and care when handling the religious dimensions of culture as applied to target language instruction. The goal is a balanced, fair treatment of the religious dimensions of the culture studied. Treating all sides justly; showing no more favor to one side than another; taking steps to curtail views promoting selfish personal advantage; and not being swayed by personal or cultural biases describe traits instructors and staff personnel must possess when handling the religious dimensions of culture as applied to language learning.

b. Audio-Visual Aids Faculty members, at the team level, select appropriate audio-visual aids. These professionals choose, review and handle training materials with prudence and responsibility.

c. Objectivity Instructors and curriculum developers strive for accurate, objective, factual, and unbiased presentations of the often many sided issues of religion/culture. Departments must exercise painstaking care, which focuses upon developing sensitivity, when treating the multifaceted dimensions of culture/religion.

d. Teach, not Preach Instructors and curriculum developers are educators. Understanding of the other's point of view, rather than conversion to a differing religious viewpoint, is the aim.

In the classroom, proselytizing activity easily leads to harassment, unfair treatment of another's beliefs, and a denial of equal opportunity for all. Slanderous, demeaning, disparaging remarks and attitudes have no place. Demonizing techniques, displaying stereotyped, prejudicial notions are uncalled for. Advocating conspiratorial schemes of religious/political movements is improper. Promoting harmful untruths about another's religious point of view often creates a climate of bigotry and unrest.



e. Specific Applications Within the structured classroom, the following counsel, gleaned from guidance of the DLIFLC Staff Judge Advocate, applies.

(1) Objectivity The general rule concerning religion in the classroom is NO proselytizing, NO evangelizing and NO personal opinions. All that should happen in a structured classroom environment is objective instruction of the religious aspects of whatever culture is studied.

(2) Impartiality Instructors must neither editorialize when discussing religion nor communicate opinions non-verbally (rolling eyes, shaking head). Students should come away from the class having no idea what the instructor personally thinks about the religious practices of the culture studied.

(3) Neutrality If somehow a student makes known his or her personal beliefs, the instructor should steer the discussion away from these personal beliefs and attitudes. Educators must do everything in their power to ensure the student does not feel as if his or her personal beliefs were criticized, discouraged, encouraged or applauded.



f. Student Responsibility Students as well have a responsibility in ensuring that a wholesome climate for learning exists. Prejudiced views, biased questioning, belittling attitudes and stereotyped treatments of the religious persuasions of others have no place--whether by students or faculty--within the DLIFLC classroom setting.

3. References

a. Potentially Controversial Topics in the DLI Foreign Language Curriculum, DLIFLC Command Policy 5-93, 20 APR 1993

b. Professional Code of Ethics, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center

c. Joint Ethics Regulation, Code of Ethics for Government Services, DoD 5500.7-R, Sections 3-7

d. Guidance Concerning Religion in the Classroom, CPT William Koon, Administrative Law, Staff Judge Advocate, DLIFLC, 23 December 1996

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Pronunciation Key (Adapted from HarperCollins Dictionary of World Religions, ed. Jonathan Smith, [New York: HarperCollins, 1995]), p. xxvi.

Symbol	Sound	Symbol	Sound
a	cat	ng	sing
ah	father	o	hot
ahr	lard	oh	go
air	care	oi	boy
aw	jaw	oo	foot
ay	pay	oo	boot
b	bug	oor	poor
ch	chew	or	for
d	do	ou	how
e, eh	pet	p	pat
ee	seem	r	run
f	fun	s	so
g	good	sh	sure
h	hot	t	toe
hw	whether	th	thin
i	it	th	then
i	sky	ts	tsetse
ihr	ear	tw	twin
j	joke	uh	ago
k	king	uhr	her
kh	ch as in German Buch	v	vow
ks	vex	w	weather
kw	quill	y	young
l	love	z	zone
m	mat	zh	vision
n	not		